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Communications

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Kevin Parsons Advocates for GWU Degree Completion Program

Kevin Parsons imagined building a career on the racetrack. The son of NASCAR driver Benny Parsons, his aspirations were centered on stock cars, pit stops, and checkered flags. Yet his parents wanted their son to earn a college degree. He ended up at Gardner-Webb University almost by default.

“I had a cousin that was going to Gardner-Webb, so I decided to go there and room with him in good old Mauney Hall,” Parsons explained. “I still thought I was going to drive a race car for a living and the only reason I was going to college was because of my parents. No one in my family had ever attained a college degree and they really wanted me to go.”

Like many incoming students, Parsons wasn’t sure where to focus his studies. “When I took the placement tests during orientation, I found out I could attain a few free credit hours in math if I took calculus,” he recalled. “Once I earned an ‘A’ in that class, I decided to major in math, in which I had always done well in school.”

He remembers several instrumental individuals who impacted his time at GWU. Dr. Paul Jolley (then the chair of the math department), Dr. Gil Blackburn, and even golf coach Dr. “Doc” Garland Allen all played an important role in shaping Parsons’ future. “I tried out for the golf team and was fortunate enough to make it,” Parsons shared. “Doc was such a good man. I thoroughly enjoyed my time playing golf for Gardner-Webb.”

In 1987, Parsons graduated with a Bachelor of Science in Mathematics. He immediately went to work in the racing industry. “Even though I won a few local short track races, I didn’t make it to the ‘big time,’” he stated.

About six years after graduation, he received a call from the vice president for instruction at Richmond Community College (RCC) in Hamlet, N.C. “He had heard that I had a math degree and offered me a chance to teach some developmental math classes,” Parsons reflected. “I loved teaching so much that I started graduate school in 1994 at UNC-Pembroke. When I graduated in 1996, I was offered a full-time instructor position at RCC.”

Following more than two decades as a math instructor at Richmond, Parsons applied for—and was appointed to—the position of vice president for instruction at Richmond Community College.

“A typical day is attending meetings to help the citizens of Richmond and Scotland counties develop a better life than they currently have,” Parsons shared. “We are trying to remove any barrier they may have that is preventing them from being successful.”

In this role, Parsons also serves as an advocate for the Gardner-Webb University Degree Completion Program (DCP), with RCC offering online and evening DCP classes in Hamlet and Laurinburg, N.C. “I am a big supporter of the DCP at Gardner-Webb, and believe the connection between GWU and our students has been a positive influence in helping them achieve a four-year degree,” he offered.

Although his vocational aspirations didn’t quite turn out the way he originally imagined, Parsons is grateful for the twists, turns and unexpected pit stops of his career journey. “For fun, I still do local racing,” he admitted. “I’ve been doing it for a total of 15 years and I love it now more than ever.”